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The Parkway Belt: West

a bold attack on the problems of urban growth

Why do we need a Parkway Belt?

In the last thirty years urban growth in most of North America's cities has accelerated rapidly. In Ontario this growth has given us the urban complex along the north shore of Lake Ontario. Ontario, however, is more fortunate than many areas for we still have the opportunity to avoid the worst aspects of urban sprawl.

This is what the Parkway Belt is designed to do. It is a vital component of DESIGN FOR DEVELOPMENT: THE TORONTO-CENTRED REGION (now the expanded Central Ontario Region). A key part of the Central Ontario Region is a two-tier complex of cities along the lakeshore. These cities must be separated, yet linked, or they will merge into a huge unwieldy urban mass.

What will the Parkway Belt do?

To implement the two-tier concept and to give the inhabitants congenial, functional communities, the Parkway Belt is designed to achieve four objectives:

1. To define and separate communities, giving residents a sense of community identity.
2. To link communities with service corridors that will move people, goods, energy and information without disrupting the communities.
3. To provide a land reserve for needs which cannot be foreseen today.
4. To place open space and recreational facilities near the lakeshore cities.

1. community identity

Residential developments are filling up the open areas that once separated communities, joining one town to another, yet failing to identify with either and having no centre of their own. When this happens, it becomes impossible to organize a community's social, political and economic life in any satisfactory way.

The Parkway Belt will give visible physical boundaries to communities, using natural features such as rivers and man-made features such as utility corridors.

2. integration of communities

In the urban complex along the lakeshore, communications will be all-important. The cost of providing services to the complex is equally critical. The advantages of grouping them together in one corridor are compelling.

As proposed, the Parkway Belt already incorporates many of these — parts of Highways 401 and 403, the QEW, some of CN's and CP's busiest rail lines, and numerous electric and telephone lines, together with gas pipelines. More will have to be built as demands increase.

3. land reserve for future needs

The Parkway Belt has built-in reserved rights-of-way for new forms of transportation, and more utilities and pipelines. It also contains blocks of land for activities requiring large sites with high regional accessibility, such as transformer stations and sewage treatment plants.

Not all future needs can be foreseen, even though we know they will arise. Experience has shown that if we do not reserve land, we eventually pay a high price in social and economic costs to satisfy a demand for, say, new transportation modes or new kinds of recreation facilities.

4. open space system

In an era when the work week is growing shorter and income is growing greater, recreational facilities will have to be provided at a rate greater than ever before.

The Parkway Belt's basically linear shape is expanded at many points to take in and protect potential recreational areas; for example, river banks, ravines, parts of the Niagara Escarpment, and botanical gardens.

Open space, however, is no great benefit if it cannot be readily reached. Access will be provided by the highways and arterial roads the Parkway Belt has been designed to accommodate.

Not all of the open space is public. Much is farmland, woodlots, golf courses or large residential lots in private ownership — and will remain so. Also, much of the undeveloped land adjacent to the Belt will remain in its present state, particularly in the Niagara Escarpment, north of Metro Toronto and west of Toronto International Airport. Other parts are slated for eventual urban development — "Burlington North" and "Oakville North". The development of these two corridor cities, however, will not be undertaken for many years.

What does the Parkway Belt look like?

A map of the defined portions of the Parkway Belt appears on the reverse side of this pamphlet. The portion proposed at present consists of five sections: three north-south "minibelts" and two east-west links. The system begins in Dundas and will end eventually just east of Oshawa, although the part described here extends only to Markham.

As the design of the Parkway Belt was based on the four principles, it reflects their various demands depending on which principle predominates in any one area. For example, where parks and conservation areas prevail, the Belt is wide and irregular; where the purpose is mainly transportation the Belt is long and narrow.

There are places where the Parkway Belt falls short of its aims: existing urban development restricts its size in some places; in one area an electric transmission line will have to pass through a conservation area; some existing industry is incompatible.

But overall, the Parkway Belt will achieve its goals. It has been carefully designed, and is being implemented before the evils of urban sprawl take over completely.

How will the Parkway Belt be implemented?

The Parkway Belt will become reality under THE PARKWAY BELT PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT. This special legislation permits the Treasurer to define by order an area known as the Parkway Belt and to apply land-use regulations to the defined area. Both the order and the regulations are now in effect.

The act also stipulates that the main planning and public participation provisions of another new piece of legislation, THE ONTARIO PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT, will apply to the Parkway Belt.

Phased purchases of land for public open space and transportation and utilities rights-of-way are also part of the implementation program. All land purchases will be subject to existing law and practices, and market value will be paid in all cases.

The land-use regulations temporarily restrict all land within the Parkway Belt West (i.e., as far east as Markham) to agricultural uses. They do not affect existing industries and homes, even though these may be incompatible. The regulations provide further that home owners may make additions to their homes — add another room, build a garage — through the usual municipal building-permit procedures. They also allow anyone who has a building permit dated prior to the date the regulations took effect to go ahead with his construction. Building permits for individual dwellings issued since then, however, are invalid unless the building lot has a minimum size of 50 acres and a minimum of 900 feet frontage on a road. Anything smaller would be contrary to the open space principle on which large parts of the Belt are based. The regulations prohibit all new industrial development, for this, too, would thwart the intent of the Belt.

Henceforth, permission will be given only for developments that meet the principles governing the Belt.

The Parkway Belt plan will be adopted under the provisions of THE ONTARIO PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT. The Parkway Belt West (as shown in the map) is now an area for which a provincial development plan has been prepared. The next steps are:

- a) Copies of the proposal for the Parkway Belt West must be furnished to all affected municipalities and to the advisory committees called for by THE ONTARIO PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT, with a request for comments and suggested changes. The public will have access to this material and their comments too will be invited.
- b) When the submissions and comments have been received, the Treasurer will appoint officers to conduct public hearings and report back. These reports will be made public.
- c) After the public hearings the Treasurer will submit his recommendations to the government for the formal adoption of the Parkway Belt West Plan as part of the development plan for the Central Ontario Region.
- d) When adopted, probably with modifications arising from the public hearings, the plan will be binding on all provincial agencies, municipalities and the private sector. That is, provincial programs and municipal official plans and programs must conform to the plan, and no conflicting private development will be allowed.

With the plan adopted and municipal official plans and by-laws amended, the land-use regulations will be lifted from the entire area. The Parkway Belt will then be maintained by the regular planning process under THE PLANNING ACT and THE ONTARIO PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT.

Almost half the privately owned land within the Parkway Belt West is already covered by appropriate official plan designations and zoning by-laws. The municipalities need only ensure that any future changes in their official plans and zoning by-laws are also compatible.

About 20 per cent of the privately owned land is covered by designations under municipal plans and by-laws which are incompatible with the Belt's aims. These will have to be amended. The amendments, however, will not necessarily be uniform throughout the Belt. Depending on which of the four objectives are most essential in any one area, some uses will be allowed in one part of the Belt which would not be suitable in another.

What will it cost?

The cost of the acquisition program cannot be estimated accurately but studies show it will probably be about \$150 to \$200 million.

The Parkway Belt East

The order defining the Parkway Belt West and the land-use regulations apply only to the western part of the Belt as shown on the map. The eastern portion is in the process of being defined. When it is ready, a similar order and land-use regulations will be prepared. The general provisions of THE ONTARIO PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT and THE PARKWAY BELT PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT will apply to the eastern section as well.



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The Honourable John White, minister
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REQUEST FOR OTHER INFORMATION

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Please send me your pamphlet(s) on: ☐ The Niagara Escarpment
☐ The Ontario Planning and Development Act, 1973

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